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**Charles Richard Drew, M. D.  
1904-1950**

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*"And the king said unto his servants, Knowest thou not that a prince and a great man is fallen this day in Israel."*

### SPRINTER

CHARLEY had a habit of saying, "I'm a sprinter." And after the manner so inferred, he lived and died. The lessons of the playing field he applied to daily life at home and abroad. In the specialties in which he excelled in track, football, basketball and baseball, there are intervals between the periods of concentrated action, when the performer gets a chance to relax. This saves energy for sudden supreme exertion. In this pattern of directed effort, Charley liked to get things done. The long grinds of the distances did not appeal to him. His seventeen years in the medical profession and particularly the last nine as professor of surgery at Howard, however, did not permit relaxation. Rather, they were a long sprint marked by meteoric spurts. Even the end was in this vein. A swift drive after an overloaded day and just once the stout body failed to master the fatigue it had so often overcome. Life's journey was ended, leaving as legacy a record of epic quality and harmony.

### NATIVITY

Eldest of five children of Richard T. and Nora Burrell Drew, Charles Richard was born June 3, 1904, at 1806 E St., N.W., in Washington, D. C. At the time of the accident on April 1, 1950, he lacked two months of reaching his forty-sixth birthday.

The senior Drew was a carpet-layer and Mrs. Drew was a graduate of the local Miner Normal School, well known for her beauty and amiability. The family lived in modest circumstances and was close-knit and highly respected. After his father's death in 1935, although the children were grown, Charley functioned as head of the clan, which looked to him for decisions in matters great and small.

The family belonged to the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church under the pastorate of the late esteemed patriarch, the Rev. Walter H. Brooks. The childhood influences of this wholesome asso-

ciation were reflected throughout Charley's life. The respectable neighborhood in which he spent his early years was part of an area formerly known as "Foggy Bottom," reminiscent of heavy mists from the Potomac. In the rugged tradition of local legends, the boys of this area demanded that an intruder from without prove himself on the spot and such a one had to show his worth or choose discretion as the better part. From success in the community of small boys where status is determined by whom one can lick, Charley early acquired the self-reliance which was later to stand him in good stead. He established a newspaper route around the age of twelve, which he developed to where he had six boys working for him when he transferred it to his brother Joe, on entering high school.

### FORMAL EDUCATION

Charley's educational processing embraced the gamut offered in North America. In Washington he attended the public schools, graduating from the Stevens Elementary School in 1918 and the Dunbar High School in 1922. Amherst College awarded him the A.B., in 1926, and McGill University, the M.D., C.M., in 1933. He served an externship in the Royal Victoria Hospital, 1932-33. The following two years were spent as interne and resident in medicine, respectively, in the Montreal General Hospital. In 1934 he became a diplomate of the National Board of Medical Examiners. He served a residency in surgery in Freedmen's Hospital, Washington, in 1936-37. From 1938 to 1940 he was resident in surgery at Presbyterian Hospital, New York, while a General Education Board fellow in surgery at Columbia University. He received the Med. D. Sc. (doctor of medical science), from this institution in 1940.

### ATHLETICS

The Twelfth Street Branch of the Y.M.C.A. opened in 1912, made available to colored boys in the Nation's capital a gymnasium and swimming pool for the first time. At about the same

time or shortly before, a Jim-Crow aquatic cubicle had been opened on the Monument Grounds. In these two pools Charles Drew learned to swim. The following summer a small pool was opened on the D.C. playground opposite Mott School and celebrated its advent with an open meet. In the "small boys class" Charley won his first medals on this occasion. Though he remained a good swimmer he never returned to the water for competition. But after college, in 1928 and 29, he was a lifeguard at the newly opened Francis Swimming Pools in Washington and served the following three years there as manager and unofficial coach.

In Dunbar High he burgeoned rapidly into a four letter man and in his senior year was Captain of Company E in the Third Regiment of the High School Cadet Corps. The James E. Walker Memorial medal for all-round athletic performance was awarded to him in both his third and fourth years.

At Amherst he was a star on the freshman football team and in track became the only member of his class to win a major letter in the freshman year. In this college it was customary for the outstanding third year man on any team to be elected captain for his senior year. Fraternity politics entered sometimes, but in cases where there was no question as to the best performer, the custom was regularly followed. Drew was unchallenged top man in two sports and thus would have been expected to have been chosen captain of both football and track teams. In the class ahead of him, however, the logical candidate in the case of both the cross country and track captaincies was also a Negro, and passed over. There was campus discussion, and the racial problem recurred, for the next major team election was for football captain. Again the Negro, this time Charley, was passed over. The conscience of the College was aroused by these three successive reversals of custom and open criticism was heard. When track election was held the following spring, Drew, as the team's high scorer, was unanimously elected captain.

There was a student group called "Scarab" composed of ten or a dozen seniors who were recognized as the most outstanding men on the campus from the standpoint of all-round achievement. Scarab tapped its own successors each year

from the Junior Class. Charley was a logical choice, but again was passed over. This produced a split within the group itself, some demanding vainly that he be inducted *post facto*.

In his junior year, Charley was voted the Thomas W. Ashley Memorial Trophy, emblematic of the team's most valuable football player, and on graduation he received the Howard Hill Mossman Trophy, a huge and magnificent cup, as the man who had contributed the most to Amherst in athletics during his four years in college.

Drew was chosen for the All Little Three mythical elevens in 1924 and 25 and in the latter year received All American honorable mention as an All Eastern half-back. In track he scored each year in the New England intercollegiate championships, winning the high hurdles and a fourth in the high jump in his final year. The following summer he won the Junior National A.A.U. high hurdles championship.

After a two year lay-off coaching at Morgan, he returned to active competition on entering medical school at McGill, where professional students may engage in varsity sports if they choose. He went on to win Canadian championships in the high and low hurdles, high jump and broad jump. In one Canadian intercollegiate competition he earned 66 points to establish an all time high-scoring record. McGill elected him track captain in 1931, at the end of his sophomore year.

#### TWO HIGHLIGHTS

It might not be amiss to set down three occasions which after a quarter of a century are still vivid in many minds. In 1924, in the first of Little Three championship games (Williams, Wesleyan and Amherst), Amherst was playing Wesleyan University. There were three Negroes on the team, Charley, George Gilmer of New York, the fastest back on the team, and Ben Davis, tackle, lately a New York City Councilman. Gilmer ran the kickoff for a touchdown with Ben and Charley as interference taking out the last men. Then Wesleyan got ahead 10-6. In the final seconds as a desperate effort, Charley was pulled back from end to throw a thirty-five yard pass across the goal line to quarterback John McBride who leapt up in the midst of a sea of frantic Wesleyan arms and snared the ball. It was a perfect storybook finish.

Then there was the game against Princeton. Drew and Davis were on the Amherst team this year. It was the first time Negroes had been used against Princeton since the latter had mauled Paul Robeson many years before. Coach 'Tuss' McLaughry,\* had talked it over with Coach Roper of Princeton and it had been agreed there would be no foul play. Amherst did not expect to win. It was a tune-up for Princeton, a "big" team at that time. All things considered, Charley turned out to be the real star of this game. While the Princeton players did not assault Drew or Davis, it was noticeable that the latter were not handled with conspicuous gentleness and on one occasion when Drew was spilled upside down a shout went up from the Princeton side.

#### A LOWLIGHT

There was an unforgettable incident following a track meet at Brown University in 1925. Charley had had an infected leg following a football injury and his return to the track team had been doubtful. When the Amherst team went to Providence he had been sent ahead to a Boston surgeon to determine whether or not he would be permitted to compete. He arrived at Brown just in time to take the field with the rest of the team and there was great rejoicing over his return. There were four colored boys on that team, George Gilmer ran the sprints, Bill Hastie, the quarter and the half mile, the writer the mile and the two mile and Charley was in the high hurdles, shot put, high jump and broad jump. The meet was close but Brown won by a few points. Collectively, the four colored boys had won a substantial number of the points of the Amherst team.

After the meet we found ourselves last to leave the dressing room. As we emerged the rest of the team was standing unusually quietly over by the convoy of limousines in which we travelled. The head coach, the coach of field events, and the student manager, were in a huddle, but still we did not catch on. Then the manager came over and said he was very sorry but that during the meet the Narragansett Hotel had heard there were colored boys on the Amherst team and had sent word that they would not serve them with the team although they would serve "Doc" New-

port, the colored trainer. The manager continued that he had called every other hotel in Providence and none could serve so large a group on such short notice. Would we mind, therefore, taking dinner in the Brown University commons? We were caught flatfooted, fatigued from the rigors of the meet and momentarily silenced by the fact that the team had deserted us by being willing to go ahead and eat at the Narragansett anyway, which they did. The four of us went to the Brown commons, but it was a silent, spare meal. The convoy picked us up and we each rode in different cars, but the night ride back to Amherst was painfully silent in those four cars. That was such a bad one that it was seldom mentioned afterward even among ourselves.

#### COACH

After graduation from Amherst, Charley went to Morgan College for two years as director of athletics. In this brief period he brought the school's teams, especially football and basketball, from little better than high school caliber, into collegiate championship class. Many of the alumni of his Morgan teams are well known. The list would include Talmadge Hill, now assistant coach at Morgan; "Pinky" Clark, athletic director of Vocational High in Baltimore; "Lanky" Jones, a New York physician; "Cutie" Brown, assistant athletic director at Baltimore's Douglass High and Ted McIntyre, basketball coach of Armstrong High in Washington.

He also took up the saxophone while at Morgan, practicing on a battered second-hand instrument from which he claimed he produced musical tones. Fortunately, the delusion was not serious. His contribution to music was the words to the national hymn of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, for which the music was written by his college mate, Professor Mercer Cook, of Howard University.

Despite an immense popularity and as promising an outlook as an athletic director in a Negro college can have, Charley resigned his position to study medicine.

#### MCGILL

He applied first to the Howard University School of Medicine, but was refused admission because Howard required eight hours of English

\* McLaughry later became famous for his "eleven iron men" teams at Brown and is now head coach at Dartmouth.

and he had had only six hours which met the standard requirement at all other medical schools. This despite the fact that Amherst has never had a reputation as an inferior collegiate institution. After turning him down for medical school, Howard offered Charley the post of assistant football coach with faculty status. He told the University officials that if his English was not adequate to permit him to become a student in their medical school, he was sure it would not qualify him for a faculty post in the Department of Physical Education.

McGill's admission requirements did not prove quite so rigorous, so off he went to Montreal. But has it not often proved that "the stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner"?

At McGill, Charley hit an intellectual stride he had not hitherto shown, although there had been signs. Once, at Amherst, he had earned a 100 in a chemistry final, a sort of thing which didn't happen, because Amherst finals were real finals which counted a third of a year's course.

He won at McGill the annual prize in neuro-anatomy, was elected to Alpha Omega Alpha, the medical honorary scholastic fraternity and in his senior year won the Williams Prize on the basis of a competitive examination given annually to the top five men in the graduating class.

He was highly esteemed in Montreal and had good opportunities for a Canadian medical career, but as he had learned at Amherst something of the subtler limitations on the Negro in the United States, so he came to sense the invisible lines under the British system. Of his own volition he sought to return to Washington and obtain an appointment at Howard Medical School where he envisioned a big job to be done, despite the extraordinary precautions to ensure the proper caliber of students which he had personally encountered.

#### HOWARD

Accordingly he wrote the present writer in December 1934 asking about the set-up at Howard.

\* \* \* \*

*"No, I am not about to apply for the job of professor, at least not yet, but I should like to have an idea of the set up there, so that I might bear it in mind in my further training."* \* \* \* \*

Afterward he applied to Dean Numa P. G. Adams for an opening in surgery. His first appointment on the Howard faculty was as instructor in pathology for 1935-36. This initial appointment for a year in pathology was a routine in the training of surgeons. The next year 1936-37, he was assistant in surgery on the medical faculty while surgical resident in Freedmen's Hospital, and the following year, instructor in surgery and assistant surgeon in the Hospital.

Dr. Drew was now definitely an important part of the rebuilding program for the medical faculty which had been long planned and had begun to be executed under Dean Adams, who took office in 1929.\* As Charley came on the scene the preclinical portion of this program was nearing completion and attention was being concentrated on the clinical phases. The General Education Board had made available fellowships for the training of men in all the fields and on one of these Charley spent the next two years, 1938-40, in graduate study in surgery at Columbia University and as resident in surgery in Presbyterian Hospital.

In the Department headed by Dr. Allen O. Whipple, Charley came to work under the immediate direction of Dr. John Scudder, assistant professor of clinical surgery.

#### BLOOD BANKS

Dr. Scudder's team was engaged in studies relating to fluid balance, blood chemistry and blood transfusion. These subjects were concerned with a vital area of modern surgical advance. All operations produce more or less "shock" upon the patient. The more we can learn about the physiological mechanisms and alterations to be anticipated, the more lives we can save by specific treatment before and after the operation. This was an important laboratory for a Negro surgeon to enter, because his students would generally go afield to places where surgeons tended to focus too much on the scalpel and too little on the pre- and post-operative care to which new discoveries have contributed so greatly.

Dr. Drew's special province became the study of blood preservation, and in preparing his doctoral thesis, "Banked Blood," he came to have first-hand knowledge of all that was known on the

\* v. Cobb, W. M. Progress and Portents for the Negro in Medicine. NAACP. 1948, pp. 18-24.

subject. It was the accident of the military emergency creating a vital need just after he had collated all available information about the substance needed that made him the man of the hour.

The appended list of publications, the first of which appeared in April, 1939, shows the nature of the specific investigations in which Dr. Drew had collaborated. These, with his thesis studies, enable one readily to understand how, when the Service calls came, he was superbly equipped both with the laboratory experience and breadth of information the situation required.

After graduation from Columbia in June, 1940, he returned to Howard as assistant professor of surgery, and surgeon, Freedmen's Hospital, but not for long.

#### BLOOD PLASMA PROJECTS

The Blood Transfusion Association is a non-profit corporation organized in 1929 for the principal purpose of improving the supply of blood for transfusion purposes in New York City. It financed research programs at various institutions and one of these in 1940 had been devoted to blood plasma, conducted by Drs. Scudder and Drew at Presbyterian Hospital.

By June, 1940, it was felt that knowledge of blood plasma had so advanced as to be useful in saving life in the war areas of Europe. At this time Dr. Scudder suggested the idea of shipping plasma to France and England to the President of the Association. The President, John F. Bush, appointed a committee of Dr. E. H. L. Corwin, Dr. Scudder and Dr. Drew to make recommendations as to requirements for a project. This committee's report was submitted July 1.

Meanwhile, the military situation grew worse and the systematic bombing of England was under way. Dr. Drew received a cablegram from Dr. John Beattie, under whom he had studied anatomy at McGill, then Director of the Research Laboratories of the Royal College of Surgeons, which read:

*"Could you secure five thousand ampoules dried plasma for transfusion work immediately and follow this by equal quantity in three to four weeks fullstop contents each ampoule should represent about one pint whole plasma—BEATTIE."*

Drew had to reply that there were not 5,000 ampoules of dried plasma in the world, but that aid would come.

The "Blood for Britain" project was swiftly organized by the Blood Transfusion Association and Dr. Drew was chosen by the Board of Medical Control of the Association as "best qualified of anyone we know to act in this important development." Howard University was requested to grant Dr. Drew a leave of absence to serve as full-time Medical Supervisor of the project. Howard complied and Drew assumed his duties in September, 1940.

The Blood Transfusion Betterment Association stated of his work, "Since Drew, who is a recognized authority on the subject of blood preservation and blood substitutes, and, at the same time an excellent organizer, has been in charge, our major obstacles have vanished."

In February, 1941, he was appointed Director of the first American Red Cross Blood Bank, at Presbyterian Hospital, and Assistant Director of Blood Procurement for the National Research Council, in charge of blood for use by the United States Army and Navy.

The public well remembers the national resentment created by the blood segregation policy of the Red Cross. Dr. Drew was allowed to leave the program just as it was about to become nationalized. Realizing even how badly his services were needed back at Howard, it seems strange that his country could find no further use for the services of a citizen who had been of such vital expert assistance in the critical hour. One hears that it was thought that a Negro would not be acceptable in a high place in a national program. Perhaps the Red Cross, or the National Research Council, or the military authorities can provide an explanation. Dr. Drew is not known to have murmured.

#### FREEDMEN'S HOSPITAL

In April, 1941, Dr. Drew was certified a diplomate of the American Board of Surgery. In October, 1941, following the recommendation of Dr. Joseph L. Johnson, acting-dean of the medical school, he assumed duties as professor and head of the Department of Surgery at Howard, and chief surgeon of Freedmen's Hospital. In that same month he was made an examiner for the American Board of Surgery.

An immediate task was further implementation of the residency training program which had been planned for all the clinical services of the Hospital by the late Dean Numa P. G. Adams and set up for surgery and medicine, respectively, by Dr. Edward L. Howes and Dr. Raymond Gregory, who came to Howard for a five-year period under a special grant from the General Education Board. In the residency training program Dr. Drew was eminently successful. Eight surgeons, so processed, have already become diplomates of the American Board of Surgery and more will follow.

Closely associated with Dr. Drew in this training program from the beginning was Dr. James Richard Laurey, professor of thoracic surgery, who joined the faculty at the same time as Dr. Drew and is now his acting successor.

Freedmen's Hospital historically has presented numerous complex administrative problems. As a contribution to resolution of these, Dr. Drew was appointed chief-of-staff in January, 1944. He served in this capacity until 1946 when he was appointed medical director of the Hospital for two years. These two assignments consumed a tremendous amount of energy which was not as productive as it might have been because the positions did not carry clearly defined authority. Dr. Drew took in stride the enormous amount of drudgery required by these duties. He said that although the jobs did not appeal particularly to him, he might as well take them for a spell to fill out the record.

In his teaching and ward work, Dr. Drew was dynamic and inspirational. His greatest emphasis was upon physiological surgical principles. It may be safely said that as a result of his unrelenting efforts, modern surgery with a progressive outlook is firmly established in the Howard Medical Center.

This hospital tour of duty had required the sacrifice of continued research in the field which had brought him international distinction and he was looking forward to an early resumption of intensive research activity.

Surgery is the most remunerative of medical fields. Consequently, there tend to arise in hospitals generally, practices which require sharp ethical scrutiny. Freedmen's was no exception in this respect. With firm hand, all procedures in the Department of Surgery were maintained on the high-

est ethical plane. In referral practice Dr. Drew spread the work as equitably and generously as possible among his colleagues, often seeming to get nothing for himself. He supported his family practically entirely on his modest salary, though he could easily have arranged matters otherwise, without incurring professional criticism.

In pushing as rapidly as possible the development of all services in his own Department he endeavored to be of the utmost assistance and encouragement to other institutions. Noteworthy were the many relationships effected with Meharry Medical College, whose professor of surgery, Dr. Matthew Walker, trained under him.

#### ADDITIONAL SERVICES

In addition to his numerous formal duties, Dr. Drew served in many adjunct professional capacities. Since 1944, he had served as chairman of the Surgical Section of the National Medical Association and brought new vigor and standards to this group. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Society for Crippled Children; of the Board of Trustees of the District of Columbia Branch of the National Poliomyelitis Foundation; of the Board of Directors of the District of Columbia Chapter of the American Cancer Society and of the Deans' Committee, Veterans Administration Hospital, Tuskegee. He also served on the Executive Board of the Twelfth Street Branch of the Y.M.C.A. with which he had been so beneficially associated in his boyhood.

He was in great demand as a speaker for both lay and professional groups and conferences of various kinds. His counsel was widely sought and freely given in connection with many professional problems, especially those of small minority hospitals. Several of the better known annual medical meetings such as those of the John A. Andrew Clinical Society and the Homer G. Phillips Hospital Internes Alumni Association had come to regard his services as fixtures on their programs.

#### LAURELS

Dr. Drew was fortunate in that most of his many achievements were rewarded with immediate recognition. In 1944, he received the Spingarn Medal of the NAACP for his work on the British and American blood and plasma projects. Virginia State College conferred upon him the hon-



orary D.Sc. in 1945 and his *alma mater*, Amherst, the same degree in 1947. In 1946 he was elected a Fellow of the International College of Surgeons. He received a variety of additional significant awards and citations too numerous to mention. Last summer he had the honor of serving as Surgical Consultant to the Surgeon General, U. S. Army, as a member of a team of four physicians who toured hospital installations in occupied Europe on a mission for improving the quality of medical care and instruction in these establishments. He referred to this trip as the first real vacation he ever had.

#### PERSONALITY

Throughout life, Dr. Drew had a ready geniality which radiated with magnetic effect through whatever persons or groups with which he came in contact. The moribund and the earth's exalted alike were glad to see him. His presence induced tachycardia in many a feminine heart, but he was never disturbed by such matters.

He had an easy volubility which once under way, could hardly be abated and had to finish its course. Sometimes his intensity was such that in conference he could lose objectivity. And there were occasions when from too great an emphasis on the Department of Surgery as a point of original departure, it would seem that enthusiasm would make him fail to keep in perspective the contributory efforts of others, antecedent and contemporary, working toward the same goals in the broad field of medicine. He was not wholly indifferent to his value as a public hero and he made impressive representations on minority problems on an individualistic basis.

In medical politics he played a shrewd, long-range game, the particulars of which belong to a description of the national panorama of which it was a part.

His fundamental honesty and sincerity inspired a respect and loyalty in his associates of which the several measures immediately initiated to perpetuate his memory are but one manifestation.

The endless procession which passed through Rankin Chapel from noon to midnight as he lay-in-state in an atmosphere of moving beauty and dignity were a token of the extent to which his character and achievements had gripped the public imagination. The many distinguished figures in

medicine and public life from near and far who attended his magnificent funeral were a measure of the esteem in which he was held by the informed and responsible.

#### FAMILY

He is survived by his wife, the former Minnie Lenore Robbins whom he married September 23, 1939. His courtship was a kind of romantic sprint, for he became engaged to his wife four days after he met her. There are four children: Bebe Roberta, 9, Charlene Rosella, 8, Rhea Sylvia, 6, and Charles Richard, Jr., 4. The prompt cooperative measures of the Medical School and University administration, of the Federal Government and of the association of friends represented by the Charles R. Drew Memorial Fund, Inc., to ensure that the family would not materially lack, are an eloquent expression of the universal appreciation of the father's person and work.

#### REQUIEM

In this short space and at such close range, it is possible to give but hints of the man and the crucibles in which he was forged. To attempt more would be futile and premature. Countless expressions from the medical profession, the country and the world abroad are already evidence that the ideals and objectives he served will continue growth under the benevolent lustre of his name.

W. MONTAGUE COBB, M.D.

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